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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EUN](#) [ICTY](#) [SR](#)
SUBJECT: PROSPECTS BLEAK FOR SERBIA SAA AT JANUARY GAERC

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Alyce Tidball for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) During visit a visit to Brussels on January 8, Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic emphasized that signing a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU during the January 28 GAERC and EU-Serbia troika meetings would give a boost to Tadic ahead of the second round of Serbian presidential elections on February 3. According to EU contacts, HiRep Solana and Enlargement Commissioner Rehn separately delivered the same message to Jeremic: the EU is ready to sign the agreement, but only with clear evidence that Serbia has made meaningful progress on its International War Crimes Tribunal (ICTY) commitments. To encourage progress on meeting the accession conditions, the Presidency and Commission have announced the formation of a special task force composed of representatives from the current Slovenian and incoming French presidencies as well as the Council and Commission. A contact in Rehn's office said that the task force would focus on helping Serbia meet conditions set in 2005 for accession, including work on ICTY commitments and building administrative capacity.

¶2. (C) Despite Slovenian Presidency eagerness to sign the SAA on January 28, EU and member state contacts are privately skeptical that Serbia will make the necessary progress in time. Belgium and the Netherlands are strongly opposed to any concessions on war crimes commitments, and member states remain divided on whether signing SAA during the presidential election process would help pro-Western candidates or unintentionally undermine them. While EU officials publicly emphasize that the SAA process and Kosovo status should not be linked, multiple interlocutors say that recent rhetoric from Kostunica and timing considerations for the approval of the EU's Kosovo rule of law mission (which could be agreed as soon as January 28) further complicate the situation. Absent a change in the political climate and a positive assessment from ICTY prosecutor Serge Brammertz before the GAERC meeting, contacts speculate that a more likely outcome for the meetings would be a reiteration of Serbia's European future and a positive statement welcoming the task force.

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